Trilingual education in Kazakhstani universities: Use of Kazakh, Russian and motivation towards learning English

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The development of trilingual education in Kazakhstan is an issue of national importance. The present study was conducted in two of Kazakhstan's universities to investigate the motivational conditions facilitating the learning of English as a third language. The participants were 218 students studying at the M. Auezov South Kazakhstan University, a state educational institution (n=115) and Miras University, a private university (n=103) in the 2019-2020 academic year. Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire, designed to investigate the students' language use in various settings, their motivation toward learning English, and English proficiency. In addition, a focus group interview was used to obtain supplementary qualitative data. The findings from this study emphasise that to ensure the effectiveness of learning English as a foreign language, improved motivation and organisation are crucial factors.

Introduction

Kazakhstan is a trilingual nation, with the operation of three languages, Kazakh, Russian and English. These languages were officially announced at the 12th session of the Assembly of Nations of Kazakhstan held in October 2006 (Tussupbekova, Idrissova, Smagulova, Nurmanova & Kulanova, 2017).The education system of this country has selected Kazakh as the state language, Russian as the language of inter-ethnic communication, and English as the language for integration into the global economy (Kunanbaeva, 2016).

Although Kazakhstan embodies a variety of nationalities with different languages, Kazakh and Russian are the general operating languages. In this country, the idea of trilingualism was first proclaimed by a former president, N. Nazarbayev, leading to the development of a cultural project called "The Trinity of Languages". As stated by Nazarbayev, the idea behind the establishment of such a project was to promote Kazakhstan throughout the world as a highly educated country (Nazarbayev, 2007).

One of the priorities of Kazakhstan's modern education system is to create an enabling environment for the successful implementation of trilingualism. This measure would be an effective practice for preparing the younger generation for life in a globalised world (UNESCO, 2003). Based on successful global examples of multilingual education

elsewhere, it is necessary for Kazakhstan to create appropriate motivational conditions for educational activities, to overcome any obstacles that may impede satisfactory performance, from both intellectual and practical perspectives. The consideration of such conditions also sets the ground for improving creative self-expression, satisfaction with learning, and effectiveness of foreign language pedagogy (Mekezhanova & Tleuzhanova, 2017)

Although the establishment of appropriate motivational conditions for students learning a foreign language is an important task, there are not enough studies describing conditions in trilingual universities in Kazakhstan, particularly in relation to motivational aspects. Given the importance of developing trilingual education in Kazakhstan, the present study was conducted to investigate the motivational conditions and proficiency with English as a third language among students in M. Auezov South Kazakhstan State University in Shymkent, Kazakhstan. Consequently, this study investigates Kazakh students' English proficiency (i.e., pedagogical aspect) and attitudes (i.e., motivational aspect) towards learning English.

Review of literature

Concept of multilingualism

Multilingualism has an important role in education worldwide. In the General Conference held in 1999, UNESCO adopted the 12th resolution, authorising the term "multilingual education", denoting the use of at least three languages in education. These languages include the mother tongue (i.e., learner's first language), a regional language, and an international language (UNESCO, 2003). The European Commission described multilingualism as "mother tongue plus two other languages for all" (European Commission, 2003), while García, Skutnabb-Kangas and Torres-Guzmán assumed it as "education where more than two languages are used as the languages of instruction in subjects other than the languages themselves" (García, Skutnabb-Kangas & Torres-Guzmán, 2006).

In addition, Cenoz and Genesee (1998: viii) stated, "By multilingual education, we mean educational programmes that use languages other than the first languages as media of instruction (although some teach additional languages as school subjects) and they aim for communicative proficiency in more than two languages". A trilingual setting is an educational context in which the boundaries between learning and using are blurred; in other words, the learning and use of three or more languages are intertwined (Cenoz, 2009, 2012a).

As Beetsma (2002) and Bangma, van der Meer and Riemersma (2011) have pointed out, trilingual education is the teaching of three languages, even if two of them are merely a subject in the curriculum of the school, or preparing pupils to actively speak three languages. The majority of the studies investigating tri/multilingualism have addressed pedagogical conditions rather than motivational aspects (Adamson & Feng, 2015; Cenoz,

2012b; Cenoz & Genesee, 1998; Cenoz & Valencia, 1994; Sciriha, 2001). As indicated by Hoffman (2001) and Wang (2015), trilingual education can be implemented in both formal (e.g., school) and informal (e.g., community or home) settings.

Multilingualism has multiple definitions because researchers have focused on different topics in a variety of settings. Multilingualism may be considered as an elastic concept that can be unconsciously manipulated by individuals to be adjusted to their interests, prejudices, and social fantasies (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013). According to Edwards (2012), every language-contact situation is unique because it is affected by a combination of all involved elements rather than individual elements. The purpose of this concept is that everyone can have opportunities to speak two or more languages and communicate freely learning the culture, traditions and society of other nations. Fact, language and culture are closely related. Language is not only the most important part of the culture of any people, but also one of the main tools for the formation of national identity, education of patriotism, a means of inter-ethnic communication and comfortable coexistence of people. In addition to cultural and communication functions, language plays an important role in expanding economic opportunities, both for individuals and the country as a whole.

Regarding this, the study of this topic requires the recognition of the dynamic nature of multilingualism, as well as bilingualism (Edwards, 2012), and development of a more elastic, extended, varied, and multifaceted approach. Traditionally, a multilingual phenomenon was considered the use of several languages. In Kazakhstan, Kazakh (i.e., state language), Russian (i.e., second language), and English (i.e., foreign language) are the dominating languages. Kazakh society is mainly dominated by Kazakh-Russian bilingualism owing to its historical, cultural, and geopolitical characteristics. Accordingly, Kazakh people have actual competence in the two languages and use them on a daily basis, with a non-native language being applied in everyday communication as actively as the mother tongue.

In line with global trends, policy change in Kazakhstan has led to identification of a pressing need for learning foreign languages and stimulation of teachers' and students' interest in this area. The Ministry of Education and Science has developed an action plan entitled "Roadmap of trilingual education for 2015-2020" (Republic of Kazakhstan, 2020), which sets out the process for trilingual education development and provides a special timetable for the transition to teaching subjects in English, "Strategic plan of development of the Republic of Kazakhstan by 2020" (Republic of Kazakhstan, 2020). Today multilingual education is successfully implemented in 33 secondary schools, as well as specialised schools, "Daryn", Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) and vocational schools. For the transition to trilingual education, four subjects of the science and mathematical cycle have been identified (physics, chemistry, biology, computer science) in which teaching in senior grades is conducted in English (Syrymbetova, Zhumashev, Nygmetuly, Shunkeeva & Zhetpisbaeva, 2017).

Regarding universities in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Education and Science has taken concrete steps to implement trilingual education: for example, the

amount of credits for learning Kazakh, Russian and English in the State Standards has been increased in all specialties (Mehisto & Genesee, 2015). Additionally, there are the universities where the main language of instruction is English. These are Nazarbayev University, KIMEP, KBTU, and IT University.

Despite the fact that the government is creating supportive conditions for learning a foreign language, it is clear that English still presents difficulties for many Kazakhs. There is one significant feature which cannot immediately be changed, namely the lack of a suitable language environment. Because of its geographical position, Kazakhstan borders with countries which have one main common language: Russian. As learning a foreign language requires attention, time, effort, and practice, two main research questions are considered in this study:

• Are many Kazakhs imbued with the idea of mastering three languages?
• What is the English (as a third language) proficiency level of Kazakhstani students?

Motivation toward learning a foreign language in a bilingual environment

The successful development and functioning of an educational system depends on the provision of proper psychological and pedagogical conditions. Motivation is one of the main psychological aspects of learning. The consideration of such conditions by society and the education system will facilitate the improvement of foreign language learning in a bilingual society (Steimark, 2008). The implementation of a useful and successful multilingual education requires the establishment of effective motivational status for learning a foreign language at educational centres.

The word "condition" has a variety of definitions. According to the Oxford [www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com] and Macmillan [www.macmillandictionary.com/] online dictionaries, condition means "the circumstances or situations in which people live, work, or do things", and "a rule or decision that you must agree to, sometimes forming part of a contract or an official agreement". Another definition, for example, in the Ozhegova's *Dictionary of Russian language*, includes "circumstances on which something depends". Novikov defined "conditions" as "the circumstances that determine the appearance/development of a process". In the current study, we adhered to this interpretation for considering the motivational conditions for EFL learning (Novikov, 2013). Therefore, we considered it as a set of inter-connected possibilities since there is no single approach to the concept of motivation in the pedagogical literature.

Motivation is a state of mind, filled with energy and enthusiasm, which is regarded as a human behaviour and the force which pushes a person to achieve a specific goal. It has both objective and subjective aspects. Based on the definition of motivation as an experienced desire, this construct is associated with emotion, automatically evaluating a state based on subconsciously stored values and beliefs about the object (Weninger & Kiss, 2013). There are many motivation theories, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Hertzberg's two factor theory (Ball, 2012; Lichtenberg, Lachmann & Fosshage, 2001).

The social nature of learning a foreign language addresses the establishment of new cultural identity and communication strategies. Accordingly, a large number of language learning theories are social-psychological in nature. Gardner's "socio-educational model" is a prominent model in this domain, facilitating the implementation of a great number of studies on motivation (Gardner, 2010). This model distinguishes between integrative and instrumental aspects of motivation with regard to language learning. Integrative orientation refers to the study of a language to satisfy one's desire to identify with the culture of the target language speakers. On the other hand, instrumental orientation deals with a kind of motivation induced as a result of the tendency to achieve external objectives (e.g., receiving financial rewards, passing examinations, and promoting a career) (Taie & Afshari, 2015).

Motivation is associated with commitment, enthusiasm, and persistence in achieving goals (Khusainova et al., 2018). According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), motivation in language learning refers to the scale of efforts to master the language successfully and feel satisfied with its application in life. Based on social constructivist theory, Williams and Burden (1997) believed that motivation is a construct that would push people towards cognitive and emotional consciousness and determine the continuity and periodicity of the peculiarity of people's mental and physical efforts (Sivan, 1986). Moreover, according to Dörnyei (2009: 177), "without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals, and neither are appropriate curricula and good teaching enough to ensure student achievement". Keeping learners motivated is one of the main complicated challenges for teachers (Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013).

Accordingly, it is argued that motivation toward second or foreign language learning is more complicated, compared to other aspects of learning. According to Dornyei (2009), it is required to incorporate extra personality and social dimensions into second or foreign language learning studies by considering "L2 identity" and some aspects of L2 culture. In this regard, some researchers have declared the need for broadening the original theoretical model developed by Gardner (2010) to facilitate the integration of the cognitive aspects of motivation into foreign language motivation research (Ushioda, 2008; Williams, Burden & Lanvers, 2002). This suggestion induced the implementation of a series of studies targeting the cognitive aspects of foreign language motivation. These studies were chiefly multifactorial with a quantitative design, addressing EFL learning (Williams et al., 2002).

Proficiency development in a second language requires a considerable long-term commitment. Therefore, the conceptualisation of the forces that drive self-motivated engagement in second language learning in the classroom and beyond it is a matter of fundamental importance. There are several perceptions of motivation to learn a second language. In this regard, the majority of research is performed on the second language motivational self-system. Based on the possible-selves and self-discrepancy theories, the mental representation of oneself as a second language user can act as a strong self-motivator in learning (Hessel, 2015).

In the modern education system of Kazakhstan, motivational support for students in schools and universities is based mainly on specific educational approaches and methods that take into account the students' age and motivational characteristics at an individual level. Such a kind of support is presented by teachers in the process of teaching various disciplines, including a foreign language.

Based on theoretical and methodological research, consideration of philosophical, linguistic, and psychological issues in foreign language pedagogy is a matter of fundamental importance (Matukhin & Bolgova, 2015). These three aspects are most directly related to pedagogical and motivational foci. They provide the instructional aspects of teaching, suggesting various methods that are related to the perspective on learning a foreign language in any educational environment.

The analysis of attitudes toward learning English revealed a significant relationship between language proficiency and motivational components. There are a number of studies assessing trilingual education in Kazakhstan in terms of their pedagogical, linguistic, and motivational conditions for adult and child training (Karimova, Ongarbayeva, Sebepova, Aubakirova & Mirzabekova, 2018; Kondubaeva, Bekalay, Aubakirova, Ongarbaeva & Tolkinbayev, 2018; Mehisto, 2015; Khamitova, Dzhantasova, Tugambekova & Suleimenova, 2015).

Tastanbekova et al. investigating the contradictions of "Trinity Kazakh-Russian-English languages" addressed the main problems of language education in Kazakhstan. These problems were reported as the shortage of teachers with multilingual abilities, poor condition of foreign languages teaching in rural areas, and language problems of Kazakh returnees and ethnic minorities (Tastanbekova, 2010). In another study, Kondubaeva et al. evaluated the problems of the correctness and reliability of the study in trilingual education. They suggested increasing the motivation to work together, organising collective training activities in the group, and creating a psychological atmosphere of interest (Kondubaeva et al., 2018).

Tussupbekova et al. (2017) focused on the participant's desire to use three languages and the necessity for the introduction of a trilingual education system. They also assessed the development of trilingual education in Kazakhstan and the impact of this language policy on the educational process. Results from this study provided considerable empirical evidence supporting the necessity for the introduction of trilingualism educational system. They also emphasised the importance of learning the three languages, Kazakh, Russian and English, in the Republic of Kazakhstan (Tussupbekova et al., 2017).

In this study, we focus on English as a foreign language (EFL), which is considered the term applied to teaching English to non-native speakers in a non-English speaking country. Kazakhstan's EFL circumstances may be related to Kachru's "three circles" model for the global spread of English (Kachru, 1985). Kazakhstan, presently in an "expanding circle" position, is beginning to develop through EFL and trilingual education towards an "outer circle" position. The success of Kazakhstan's EFL learning requires the creation of a certain set of motivational and pedagogical conditions, enabling the

development of students with a good level of English language knowledge. Hence the emphasis in this research is upon Kazakh students' motivation towards learning English.

Method

This analytic and descriptive study was conducted during the 2019-2020 academic year at two institutions, one a state university, the other a private university. Data were collected in two stages, a questionnaire and a focus group interview interview, both conducted in English.

In the first stage, a questionnaire was administered to a sample comprising 218 first-year students in non-linguistic majors (i.e., chemistry, biology, and information technology), selected with a targeted sampling method. It included 115 students from a state university, M. Auezov South Kazakhstan University, and 103 from a private university, Miras University. In the second stage, a focus group interview was conducted with a purposive convenience subsample of 10 students. It was organised to probe further into attitudes towards learning English, to observe their behaviour and to hear how well they used English communicatively.

Prior to the study, informed consent was obtained from all participants. They were assured about the confidentiality of their data, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. To ensure confidentiality, each participant was given a user code.

English proficiency

Students' English proficiency was assessed at the beginnings of semesters (and later on at the ends of the semesters), based on *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001 and 2018). English proficiency levels were obtained from University records. The results of the placement and final tests of English proficiency were obtained from the test centres of the universities.

Questionnaire

A researcher-made questionnaire designed to assess students' attitudes, motivation toward English learning, and English language proficiency, was administered to students of the two universities (Appendix 1). Students were informed via the *WhatsApp* social media application, and email. The questionnaire comprised 10 items on attitudes towards learning English (three motivational components), along with two tests (i.e., one placement test and one final test) to evaluate their English language proficiency. The questionnaire was generated on the *Survey Monkey* website [www.surveymonkey.com]. Its 10 items were divided into the three sections:

1. Five items assessing the dominant language (Russian or Kazakh) in different settings and occasions among the students.

2. Two items inquiring about scores in English language proficiency tests (i.e., the scores of placement and final tests (students' English language test results were taken from the test centres of the universities at the beginning and end of the semester).
3. Three items assessing students' motivation toward English learning and their viewpoints on the necessity of English language proficiency.

The data collected via the questionnaire were analysed using the *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (version 22) and *MS Excel.*

Focus group interview

The final stage was a focus group interview to explore further into students' attitudes towards learning English, and provide them with an opportunity to listen to other's ideas and get inspiration from one another.

The questions used in the focus group interview were similar to the items in the questionnaire. However, compared to the questionnaire data, it was possible to elaborate the answers to obtain deeper understandings.

There were 10 students who volunteered and were selected on the recommendation of their English language teacher, for showing very good progress in learning English. The participants in the focus group were coded S1, S2, S3, ... for anonymity. These students were given the focus group questions in English language (see Appendix 2), and the names of all participants prior to the scheduled date. This step was taken to provide them with sufficient time to prepare, to share their opinions with one another, and practise their communication skills.

The focus group was conducted with the aid of *Zoom* software, owing to contact limitations imposed by Kazakhstan's Covid-19 pandemic measures. 10 students from their homes using smart phones participated online in the interview. The initially scheduled date was postponed because of technical problems with poor Internet access (mobile network) and poor voice quality. A rescheduled interview was held on 8 June 2020, using 10 students and their English teacher as an observer who linked to the *Zoom* conference from her house. The interview, lasting for 50 minutes, was recorded and then transcribed.

The teacher-observer asked the students to give a personal background (introduction, age). Then the interview started with a brainstorming to come up with key themes, key words, and key questions. As it was pointed out before, the focus group questions were designed to cover a wide range of questions concerning motivation towards English language. The target aim of the focus group interview was to seek a consensus from the group's discussion of each question in the questionnaire and in the focus group list of questions. During the interview, the researcher was making notes and filling in the table (see Appendix 2). It was done for a deep analysing, writing only key points of the interviewees' answers.

So, the online interview gave an opportunity to observe their emotions, behaviour and communication skills, and collect information about the students' level of English, reasons for their choice to participate in the interview, their interests, and their hopes, desires, wishes, as well as their immediate and future goals in connection with the English language.

Main language use

This section presents questionnaire findings concerning students' main language use, and some motivational components for learning English. It also presents English language proficiency results, and some findings from the focus group interview.

Questionnaire findings were obtained from 218 first-year students (65% male, 35% female), with average age 18.2 years (range 17-21 years).

Table 1 presents some information on the frequency of main languages use by the first-year students of South Kazakhstan State and Miras universities. Most of the students (78.8%) at the two universities had Kazakh as their native language. Other results showed that in the M. Auezov South Kazakhstan State University, the students spoke both Kazakh and Russian among friends (44.3%), at university (60.9%), and while reading literature and watching films (55.7%). However, some students (33.0%) preferred to use only Russian while reading literature and watching films.

Table 1: Frequency of main language use by
students in different settings and occasions

University	Language	Native		At home		Amongst friends		At university		Literature and movies	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
M.Auezov South Kazakhstan State University	Kazakh	101	87.8	78	67.8	59	51.3	38	33.0	13	11.3
	Russian	2	1.7	7	6.1	5	4.3	7	6.1	38	33.0
	Kaz & Russ	4	3.5	22	17.4	51	44.3	70	60.9	64	55.7
	Others	8	7.1	10	8.7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Miras University	Kazakh	71	68.9	60	58.3	40	38.8	40	38.8	37	35.9
	Russian	5	4.9	10	9.7	18	17.5	20	19.4	19	18.4
	Kaz & Russ	10	9.7	17	16.5	45	43.7	43	41.7	47	45.6
	Others	17	16.5	16	15.5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	Kazakh	172	78.8	138	63.3	99	45.4	78	35.7	50	22.9
	Russian	7	3.2	17	7.7	23	10.5	27	2.3	57	26.1
	Kaz& Russ	14	6.4	39	17.8	96	44.0	113	51.8	111	50.9
	Others	25	11.4	26	11.9	-	-	-	-	3	1.3
Chi-square		12		10.1		13.4		15.2		23.4	
p-value		0.007		0.017		0.001		0.000		0.000	

Notes: Literature and movies - While reading literature and watching movies;
Kaz & Russ - Kazakh and Russian

With regard to the Miras University students, an equal percentage of subjects (38.8%) used Kazakh among friends and at university, and 35.9% of them used this language while reading literature and watching films. However, a larger percentage of students (63.3%) used Kazakh at home. They also spoke both Kazakh and Russian quite well among friends (44.0%), at university (51.8%), and while reading literature and watching movies (50.9%).

There was a significant difference between the students of the two universities in terms of Kazakh native language (χ^2=12; p=0.007); a slight difference in frequency of the main language at home (χ^2=10.1; p=0.017); and differences in main language amongst friends (χ^2=13.4; p=0.001), at university (χ^2=15.2; p=0.000), and while reading literature and watching movies (χ^2=23.4; p<0.000).

Motivational components

Table 2 presents the results related to differences between the two university student groups in terms of their motivation for English learning and views on the value of English language proficiency. The desire to find a prestigious job in the future and aspiration to study abroad were the motives most frequently reported by the majority of the students. Furthermore, the comparison of motivational components showed no significant differences between the students of the state and private universities (χ^2=5.7; p=0.22).

Table 2: Comparison of students' motivational components for learning English

	Motivational components	MASKS University		Miras University		Total		Chi-square	p-value
		n	%	n	%	n	%		
What motivates you to learn English?	The desire to find a prestigious job in the future	69	60.0	51	49.5	120	55.0	5.7	0.22
	To study abroad (MA, PhD)	19	16.5	21	20.4	40	18.3		
	The desire to assert oneself	18	15.6	17	16.5	35	16.0		
	The influence of family, friends, etc.	3	2.6	3	2.9	6	2.7		
	Compulsory discipline in a university program	6	5.2	11	10.7	17	7.7		
Do you study English outside the university as well?	Yes	61	53.0	54	52.4	115	52.7	3.0	0.55
	No	41	35.6	33	32.0	74	33.9		
	Have to	13	11.3	16	15.5	29	13.3		
What advantages does a person speaking several languages have?	The opportunity to become a well-rounded person	52	45.2	37	35.9	89	40.8	6.5	0.86
	A broader mental outlook and erudition	25	21.7	19	18.4	44	20.2		
	A prestigious job and high salary	17	14.7	26	25.2	43	19.7		
	The opportunity to travel	21	18.2	21	20.4	42	19.2		
Total		115	100	103	100	218	100		

It was also revealed that a high percentage of the students from both universities were sufficiently motivated to study English outside their universities. On this matter there was no significant difference between the students of the two universities (χ^2=3.0; p=0.55). As indicated in Table 2, the item related to 'the opportunity to become a well-rounded person' has the highest percentage. The students of both universities were aware of the benefits of moving with the times in this age of cutting-edge technology and innovation.

Furthermore, 25.2% of the Miras University students believed that the individuals knowing several languages would have a prestigious job. Accordingly, they were more inclined toward the financial rewards for language learning, whilst students of the state university were more inclined toward a broader mental outlook and erudition (21.7%).

There was a statistically significant relationship between the students' view on the advantages of language learning and motivation to learn English (χ^2=33.3; p<0.005). This relationship was also statistically significant when separately examined for each of the South Kazakhstan State (χ^2=16.7; p=0.03) and Miras Universities (χ^2=22.2; p=0.004).

English language proficiency results (placement and final tests)

Students' levels of language proficiency according to their CERF scores over two semesters are presented in Table 3. The results of the placement (before) and final (after) tests of English proficiency were obtained from the test centres of the Universities.

Table 3: English language proficiency level of students over two semesters

English language proficiency (1 yr)	MASKS University				Miras University				Total			
Test	Placement		Final		Placement		Final		Placement		Final	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
(Advanced) C1	7	6.0	10	8.6	-	-	24	23.3	7	3.2	34	15.5
(Upper-inter) B2	26	22.6	28	24.3	-	-	55	53.4	26	11.9	83	38.1
(Intermediate) B1	18	15.6	29	25.2	25	24.3	16	15.5	43	19.7	45	20.6
(Pre-inter.) A2	32	27.8	37	32.1	36	35.0	6	5.8	68	31.2	43	19.7
(Elementary) A1	25	21.7	10	8.6	38	36.9	2	1.9	63	28.9	12	5.5
(Beginners)	7	6.0	1	0.8	4	3.9	-	-	11	5.04	1	0.5

Results showed that both groups of university students had higher English language proficiency at the end of the semesters (Z=-9.8; p<0.0005), as expected. A significant difference was also observed between the students of the two universities in English language proficiency, both at the beginning (χ^2=44.8; p<0.000; likelihood ratio=62.1) and ends of the year (χ^2=40.8; p<0.000; likelihood ratio=43.8).

Focus group interview

This was conducted with 10 students of M. Auezov South Kazakhstan State University. The mean age of the participants was 18.2±1.2 years (age range: 17-21 years), with 6 females and 4 males. With regard to the field of the study, 5 of the participants were

majoring in information technology, and the others were studying biology or chemistry. All participants described themselves as having English proficiency at B1 level or above.

The word 'necessity' characterises three students' responses when they talked about the usefulness of English language. Considering the questions related to students' motivation, 8 students answered positively to the question asking if they liked learning English.

The majority of the students stated that they needed to learn English due to their subject specialisation. One student said, "*I need to learn English for my future specialty*" (S1). Another student stated, "*As I am a future IT specialist, it is necessary to learn many computer terminologies.*" (S2)

Out of 10 students, 2 emphasised personal interest and 3 emphasised the importance of English for their future careers as their motives for learning English. One student emphasised that since everyone is learning languages, he needed to join in learning English. Accordingly, he stated, "*Everyone learns, and I must learn as well.*"(S10)

Considering the question "What motivates you to learn English?"*, the majority of the students had future and career-oriented motives. One acknowledged, "*If I master English, I can easily find a good job*" (S2), and another said, "*To be promoted in the career, we need to know English.*" (S7)

Regarding the question "What advantages does a person speaking several languages have?", six students introduced English learning as the opportunity to become a well-rounded person. Five of these students believed that people with the ability to speak English are open-minded and more experienced. In this regard, one student stated, "*As for me, an individual knowing many languages is smart. It means that the person reads and learns a lot. All these points lead to be a well-rounded person.*" (S1)

Professional development was also cited as the main advantage for a person speaking several languages. One student asserted, "*Mastering some languages is a guarantee to have a well-paid job*". (S7)

In addition, another subject believed that "*A good job is prestigious in our community.*" (S8). Enhanced social interaction was also reported as another advantage of speaking several languages.

Two students stated very similar statements to this point, "*It gives us the opportunity to travel around the world, meet different people, communicate easily, and understand their lifestyle and culture. It is fun.*" (S4, S6)

Regarding the question, "Do you study English outside the university, as well?", only three students replied positively. Accordingly, they had a conscious orientation. One student said, "*It is necessary to study individually out of the university; I need more practice. It helps me to memorise better.*" (S2). Another student asserted, "*I understand the necessity of learning a language well because with the help of this knowledge, I can realise my dream and find a well-paid job.*" (S3)

Mostly, the students believed that they had enough time and materials to learn a language at the university. Accordingly, one student admitted, "*Out of the University, I prefer to relax with my friends.*" (S9)

The most important themes emerging from the focus group were students' positive attitudes towards learning English. Despite the fact, that they had weak communicative abilities, they tried to follow all grammar structures, correct accents. Overall, the focus group interview provided deep, context-bound data.

Discussion

The majority of the students investigated in this study were Kazakhs. This is as expected because Kazakhs predominate in Kazakhstan. In the State University, the main contingent was students coming from remote, monolinguistic regions, which were less exposed to Russian. Kazakh was the students' dominant language and the language they used in the process of learning a foreign language. However, the results also demonstrated that in urban areas, students spoke both Kazakh and Russian well. The survey also revealed that they wanted to improve their Russian in this manner.

English language proficiency

It is important to note here that the graduates of bilingual schools are more predisposed to learning languages, compared with graduates of monolingual schools. The implementation of a placement test for determining students' level of proficiency is a mandatory step for enrolling in these institutions. In the current study, the English proficiency level of the students was evaluated over two semesters. Based on the results of the placement test, the State University students had a good level of English proficiency after graduating. Furthermore, it was found that the number of students at the advanced, upper-intermediate, and intermediate levels increased at the end of the semesters. The final test results facilitated the determination of the effectiveness of pedagogical conditions in improving the proficiency of English as a third language.

It is probable that the number of hours spent on learning, government support, and status of English language influenced the final test results. According to the national curriculum related to trilingual education, all Kazakh universities have a discipline named "Foreign language-English" with credit time being increased to 5 hours a week for all specialties in the 1st year of education (Mehisto & Genesee, 2015).

Language proficiency and motivational components

Responses to the question addressing students' motivation toward English learning showed that the majority of the students considered English proficiency as the key to achieving success in work and financial well-being. Moreover, the results revealed a relationship between the students' views on the value of language learning and motivational attitudes. Accordingly, the students' language proficiency in the state universities was aligned with their motivation toward learning the language. As the results

indicated, a high percentage of students cognitively and consciously studied English outside the university because they deemed it necessary for their future careers.

The lack of adequate motivation hinders people, even those with outstanding abilities, from attaining their long-term goals. Under this condition, even the adoption of a proper curriculum or implementation of appropriate teaching cannot guarantee student achievement. A high level of motivation can even compensate for the deficiencies present in language aptitude and learning conditions. According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), despite the importance of language aptitude in language learning achievement and its great role in individual variability, motivational factors can supersede the aptitude impact. They also contended that a great number of individuals seem to learn a second or third foreign language proficiently in certain language settings in which social conditions demand it, irrespective of differences in their aptitude.

In the focus group conducted in the present study, the impact of English learning on future careers was repeatedly emphasised by the majority of the participants. Moreover, English learning was regarded as an opportunity to become a well-rounded person. The majority of the students were really motivated to learn English. According to the students' replies, they had goals for their future. However, they were concerned about making mistakes in their speech and regarded the inability to speak English properly as a weakness. They had good levels of writing, listening and reading skills; however, their speaking skills were not at a favourable level. They attributed this to the lack of an authentic English language environment. They had good accent and satisfactory vocabulary and grammar knowledge; however, they were not fluent in English.

Based on the literature, motivation plays an important role in English learning. Bernaus & Gardner (2008) stated that attitudes toward the learning situation serve as a foundation for individual differences in motivation toward learning a foreign language. In a similar study, Suryasa, Prayoga and Werdistira (2017) investigated motivation towards learning English as a second language with a sample of 30 students. They reported, "The main findings show that the students are relative 'highly' motivated and found to be slightly more 'instrumentally' motivated to learn English." Thus instrumental motivation was a significant factor among this group of students. A study by Wang (2008) indicated that autonomous extrinsic motivation correlated positively with intrinsic motivation and achievement.

Future career can be considered the main extrinsic motivation driving students towards learning English. The students in the present study were observed to have an advanced level of English proficiency and positive attitudes toward learning English. They reported studying English enthusiastically, owing to the benefit of this knowledge for their future careers. This motivation was also found in other, similar studies (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Vibulphol, 2016).

There are several main factors affecting the motivational status improving English proficiency. Some of these factors include the university, facilities, students' backgrounds, teachers, educational methods, and classroom materials. The fact, however, is that all

educational institutions are doing their best to promote trilingual education in Kazakhstan. The government is also trying to create favourable conditions for learning English by providing qualified teachers, educational materials, and well-equipped facilities.

Our results demonstrated that most of the students were consciously studying English, according to the necessity and availability of time, to ensure pursuing a successful career in terms of status, power, and financial wellbeing. Kazakhstan lacks an English language environment because of its geographical location and sharing borders with the countries having one common language (i.e., Russian). Therefore, it is necessary to emphasise that Russian language has always been and remains a powerful means of communication among the multi-ethnic people of Kazakhstan, with deep roots in history.

Limitations

The present study was a first attempt towards assessing the motivational conditions improving the proficiency of English as a third language in trilingual educational institutions in Kazakhstan. One of the limitations in the current research was the relatively small number of questionnaire items and focus group questions. Therefore, further research is needed to refine the questionnaire and the focus group procedure, and to produce more specific and more detailed recommendations for teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Important aspects for further research are the embedding of English learning into subjects such as information technology, biology and chemistry, and the integration of ICTs (information and communication technologies) into English learning.

Conclusion

As the findings of the present study indicated, students were aware of the importance of English language learning and had particular reasons for learning this language. Therefore, to ensure the effectiveness of learning a foreign language, it is important to increase motivation and establish the most effective methods of teaching, since the psychological and pedagogical conditions discussed are inextricably linked with each other.

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Appendix 1: Motivation towards learning English and English language proficiency

Personal background
• What is your name, surname?
• How old are you?

Items assessing the dominant language (Russian or Kazakh) in different settings and occasions
• Which language is your native language?
• What language do you usually speak at home?
• What language do you use with friends?
• What language do you speak at the University?
• What language do you use when you read literature, watch movies?

Students' motivation in the English language classroom
• What motivates you to learn English?
• Do you study English outside the university as well?
• What advantages does a person speaking several languages have?

Appendix 2: Focus group interview notes on motivation towards learning English and English language proficiency

Questions	Respondents' reply	Orientations, descriptions of each students' answer
Do you like learning English?	[spaces for S1 to S10 responses]	
Why do you like learning English?	[spaces for S1 to S10 responses]	
What motivates you to learn English?	[spaces for S1 to S10 responses]	
What advantages does a person speaking several languages have?	[spaces for S1 to S10 responses]	
Do you study English outside the university as well?	[spaces for S1 to S10 responses]	

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